



**Department of Justice
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Southern District of Texas**

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DRUG TRAFFICKER SENTENCED

HOUSTON, TX – Juan Ramon Esparza, 44, of North Charles, South Carolina, who was charged in a federal indictment in May 2005 with drug trafficking, was sentenced today by United States District Judge Sim Lake. United States Attorney Don DeGabrielle announced that Esparza was sentenced to serve 262 months in federal prison, without parole, a 5 year term of supervised release, and \$300 special assessment.

On July 15, 2005, Juan Esparza pleaded guilty to conspiracy to possess with intent to distribute and aiding and abetting the possession with the intent to distribute more than five (5) kilograms of cocaine and more than 50 grams of methamphetamine.

Esparza and his co-defendants were responsible for bringing cocaine and methamphetamine from the Rio Grand Valley area to the Houston area and distributing throughout the Southeastern United States. The cocaine and methamphetamine would be concealed in commercial tractor-trailer trucks. Once in Houston, the cocaine was distributed to different drug organizations.

On April 14, 2005, Esparza and his co-defendants arranged for a driver to take a load of cocaine and methamphetamine from Weslaco, Texas, to be transported to Houston. Before leaving Weslaco, agents of the Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) became aware of the load to be transported and followed the tractor-trailer into Houston.

In Houston, Esparza and others assisted in the off-loading of the controlled substances into a load vehicle at a truck stop on Wallisville Road. It was at that truck stop that ICE agents moved in and apprehended Esparza. In the back of the load vehicle was 75 kilograms of cocaine and 17 kilograms of methamphetamine.

This matter was part of an Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Force investigation by the Department of Homeland Security, Immigration and Customs Enforcement.

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